



# Focus on Safety

## Hearing Loss Prevention – Hear Today, Gone Tomorrow

Across the Maritime Industry, hearing loss claims represent one of the largest type of injury risk and cost impact. Signal Mutual has been proactive at minimizing risk & financial impacts to our Members but still our Members experienced nearly 1500 hearing loss cases with significant incurred costs in the past three years. While use of hearing protection meets some resistance it is worth the effort to bend the curve and evolve the cultural acceptance of PPE use since hearing loss claims can be easily mitigated by wearing hearing protection. Please use this informational alert to educate your workforce on preventive actions, and best practices.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Noise is not a new hazard. It has been a constant on the jobsite since the industrial revolution. However, hearing loss is not an inevitable part of the job. With proper hearing protection, both on and off the job, hearing can last your entire life. Too much exposure to loud noise can cause an employee to miss important safety instructions; result in stress from constantly straining to listen and be heard; or lead to irreversible hearing loss. The amount of damage from noise depends on the noise intensity, measured in decibels (dB), and the duration of exposure. Sounds above 130 dB are painful, and most people will avoid these. Sounds 85-120 dB may not cause physical pain, but can damage hearing over time. Very loud noise can reduce efficiency in performing difficult tasks by diverting attention from the job.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

#### Noise Monitoring

An employee's exposure to noise is measured and determined through noise monitoring. This noise monitoring data allows for the identification of occupations with an average noise exposure above 85 dBA and employees working in these occupations should be included in a hearing conservation program. Although people differ in their sensitivity to noise, work areas should be tested if:

- Employees have to shout to be heard two feet away.
- The noise hurts their ears.
- It makes their ears ring, or
- Employees hearing is affected for several hours after exposure to the noise.

#### Annual Hearing Testing

Employees in a hearing conservation program should be annually tested to detect any hearing loss long before it affects a person's ability to communicate. Individuals who show hearing loss should receive additional training on hearing protection and use. The goal is to catch hearing loss before it impacts the employee and ensure hearing protection is used correctly to prevent further loss.

#### Hearing Protection

Once noise hazards are identified, hearing protection should be provided to all employees and PPE use enforced. There are many styles, shapes and materials of hearing protection, available through various safety equipment suppliers. The important part is to wear hearing protection when working around loud noises, both on and off the job. It's the only defense against hearing loss when reducing noise exposure isn't feasible by administrative or engineering controls

#### Group Questions:

- **What is the primary source of noise in your work area?**
- **In addition to wearing hearing protection, are there additional opportunities to engineer solutions to reduce noise exposure in your work area?**
- **Where can you find hearing protection and what type is available to you?**
- **Does your hearing protection properly fit?**



**DEPARTMENT/LOCATION:** \_\_\_\_\_ **MEETING DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Meeting Lead By: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Started: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Finished: \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Open Meeting & Present** Safety Topic: \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Read** minutes from previous meeting.
3. **Persons present (Print & Sign)**

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4. **Updates** – Status of previously presented safety concerns. Discuss any pending items.
  
5. **Incidents** – Concentrate on accident *causes* to make everyone more aware. Discuss incidents or near misses that have occurred since the last meeting. Summarize incidents and any injury trends. Review corrective actions that have been taken or are needed.
  
6. **Inspection/Audits** – Discuss findings and corrective actions of safety inspections made since last meeting.
  
7. **New Information** – Ask for employee suggestions. Discuss new procedures, safety policy changes, etc.

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